

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

Please Cancel pending claims 18 and 25 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please replace claims 9 and 21 with the following claims 9 and 21:

9. (Amended) A biodegradable hydrogel comprising a network of polymer chains, wherein said network contains polymer backbones which are interconnected to one another through spacers formed by crosslinked units, wherein the spacers contain, between said polymer backbone and the crosslinked unit, one or more bonds which are hydrolysable under physiological conditions,

wherein said crosslinked unit is comprised of a polymer of (poly)glycolic acid and/or (poly)lactic acid, in combination with acrylate, methacrylate and/or hydroxyalkyl methacrylate groups; and

wherein said polymer backbones are selected from the group consisting of dextran, derivitized dextran, starch, starch derivatives, hydroxyethyl cellulose, hydroxypropyl cellulose, polyvinylpyrrolidone, polyvinylalcohol, polyacrylate, polymethacrylate, and polyethylene glycol.

21. (Amended) A crosslinkable polymer capable of forming a hydrogel, comprising a hydrophilic polymeric backbone and at least one spacer, the spacer comprising one or more bonds which are hydrolysable under physiological conditions and at least one crosslinkable group

wherein said crosslinkable group is comprised of a polymer of (poly)glycolic acid and/or (poly)lactic acid, in combination with acrylate, methacrylate and/or hydroxyalkyl methacrylate groups; and

wherein said polymer backbone is selected from the group consisting of dextran, derivitized dextran, starch, starch derivatives, hydroxyethyl cellulose, hydroxypropyl cellulose, polyvinylpyrrolidone, polyvinylalcohol, polyacrylate, polymethacrylate, and polyethylene glycol.